To Lou Ivon and Andrew Sciambra 11/25/68
From Harold Weisberg
Preliminary memo on interview with Johann Rush on Oswald's 8/16/63 literature distribution outside old ITM Bldg.

As reported yesterday, Paul Hoch interviewed Rush without Hal Verb, who could not get there. On learning this, I suggested a series of questions that Paul taped and then asked of Rush. He will now either tape his recollections of the interview, based on both recollection and notes, or type a memo. In either event, I will have it prior to going to N.O. and will bring it. The purpose of this memo is to inform you, to the degree I can, prior to that time. Should there later turn out to be disagreement between this and what Paul supplies, his will be the more dependable. I questioned him about his interview about midnight, when he had just returned from it.

Rush was reluctant to be interviewed on tape. Paul finds him half hippie, half revolutionary. He is connected with a group calling itself "Newsreel". I have some familiarity with that group. They may be artistically revolutionary but politically they need not be so considered.

He was never formally interviewed by the FBI, which is logical enough because he is the only witness of whom I know who observed this distribution for as long as a half hour. During this time he shot intermittently. His present recollection is that O'Connor of WWL was there when he arrived. He also recalls a still photographer. Having then had no reason to take special note, he now is uncertain but believes because there is nothing unusual about this recollection it is likely this is a photographer he knew, hence one for the papers.

His film was not edited, to the best of his knowledge, after the original new editing the day of the event. The pictures he gave the FBI are from this edited version.

He believes that he gave the FBI a total of 17 pictures of different frames of each of three scenes. Thus we do not know for certain how many different pictures he gave them. He believes he supplied copies to AP and UPI after Oswald's Dallas arrest but again is uncertain. If he did, these should still be in their files. I suggest a New York check. I will try and institute one with UPI in Washington tomorrow. I know a vice president well enough to ask him. If you have no other means of asking AP (perhaps Sprague), I think Healy will make the request for me when I am there.

Johann did not recognize anyone there. He says he had been in N.O. only since July. He knew O'Conner, and he knew "the secretary", meaning Dolores Neeley, Jess Core's secretary, whose name he did not recall. Paul had to prompt him. Then he recalled it. He has not heard of her recently and does not know where she is.

Garner Exhibit No. 1, he thinks, is from the O'Connor-WWL footage, which can be checked out. He thinks WWL entered this picture in a contest and that it was published in LIFE. Beginning on page 16H801 there is the early LIFE treatment (exhibit 281 ff). What seems to be the identical picture is in 291. Here the cropping is less. From internal evidence, I believe this is the corner of Camp and Common across from the old ITM and on the same side of Common. In 291 the street and traffic lane can be seen clearly. This makes it more interesting that Liebeler was silent when Mrs. Garner said the scene was Royal (unless he showed her a different picture).

Johann says he is confused as a result of Turner's interview with him and is now not certain what he recalls independently and what Turner told him.

It is my recollection that Paul says another was with Rush then. He told Paul that when Turner was with him they reviewed the film and "He told me more than I told him." They were impressed by Turner as without doubt a former FBI agent. ~~Perhaps~~ Perhaps, in time, he will ~~again~~ separate what he recalls from what Turner told him. Because Turner told me he knew little about this and agreed that Paul and Hal should do the questioning I recommended, pursuant to our meeting last week, I am perplexed that he would have told Rush anything when he was seeking Rush's independent knowledge. However, if it seems there is more than Rush might know, I do have a suggestion I will make when we discuss this. Briefly, it is that we ask Rush to sit down, alone or with Paul, and go over it again, after the lapse of some time, on tape. I think he will do it on tape if your office asks him, or if I do.

In general, he says the story of these pictures as it appears in the various suppressed documents we have resurrected is correct.

He also took the after-court pictures now part of this reel. On that occasion he interviewed both Oswald and Bringuier (which is not reflected in the film that remains). He recalls only that Bringuier called Oswald a crazy Communist (which everyone besides Bringuier is to Bringuier anyway) and Oswald indicated he would again distribute leaflets. Rush asked him to call the station should he, because fights of this sort and picketing in general were then rare in New Orleans, his recollection including only a little peace picketing (which is correct, for I have the news stories on Bringuier's picketing of the pickets, which got the entire play). This could account for his presence when Oswald resumed leafletting.

He has no copies of the stills. We have gotten further leads on these and are tracing them through the Archives. I will let you know. There is a Secret Service (not FBI) report that refers to some as "attached". You have a copy of my letter to the Archives making a general request. If necessary I will follow with a more specific request. He was present when the third part of this reel was filmed, the interview, but he was not the cameraman.

When Oswald was arrested in Dallas, he worked on this film again. He told Paul that Coporan had him make a total of six copies, of which he believes the federal agents got one. Coporan gave him permission to keep a positive and a negative himself. If he has the original negative, it is possible a clearer print might be made from it. This might cost twice as much, as I understand it, about $25.00. I suggest we wait and learn more about this. He will do it for us, if we so desire. However, from his statement it is clear a copy of the film should be in the Archives and I should be informed of it as a consequence of my inquiry. From what I was earlier told, however, the Archives does not have it for I was shown what they assured me was all their movie film and this was not then included.

Having nothing to do with this, he told Paul of having known Morris Brownlee and his unnamed girl friend in 1965 as part of the N.O. "left-wing underground scene". Morris is not left-wing and if he were in that "scene" I would very much wonder why.

There are a few inconsistencies that need not be regarded as sinister. Rush recalls himself in the darkroom in the period of federal interest in his footage. Yet the reports say the copying work was done at PanAmerican film and I was there told that the prints (8x10) were made at the Times-Pic, where there is automatic equipment for such copying. I had Paul ask him about the use of the words "film clip" in description of what he turned over. He presumes this meant the reel, for he says he had and made no small clips, as of negatives

from which stills might have been made. I think it desireable that I ask Ed Planer about this, in the event they have bills they can locate without great trouble. Ditto PanAmerican. There remains the possibility the original ITM footage was turned over ~~int~~ to the federals before the consolidated film was spliced on a single reel. In this event, the opportunity for editing did exist, and there is no way the WDSU people would have known about it unless they made a close mechanical inspection of the returned film - and then only if they got their originals, not a copy, as is what happened with the John Martin and Doyle films.

After I hear from the Archives, after we complete the separate investigation we have been making, I will make the proper, formal inquiries of Rowley and the Secret Service.

Because this also was a Secret Service rather than an FBI investigation, I suggest this is another indication the Secret Service began in New Orleans by being on the ball, until they got turned off from Washington. I do not suggest this means the FBI plotted the assassination. I do believe it is consistent with a conscious FBI whitewash. I also suggest that someone in the New Orleans Secret Service office was aware of the possible significance of Oswald's literature distribution. Some of your staff may have a good personal relationship with some of the Secret Service New Orleans personnel. At some point there might be a propitious time for a dialogue on this. We will eventually know which SS agents were working on this, all of them, as we reclaim all the existing reports. I suggest that we let this cool as we learn what we can. When the Secret Service has an interest to serve would be the best time, I think.